

Exhibit F

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Separated at the Border From Their Parents: In Six Weeks, 1,995 Children

By Julie Hirschfeld Davis

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WASHINGTON — The Trump administration said on Friday that it had separated 1,995 children from parents facing criminal prosecution for unlawfully crossing the border over a six-week period that ended last month, as President Trump sought to shift blame for the widely criticized practice that has become the signature policy of his aggressive immigration agenda.

From April 19 to May 31, the children were separated from 1,940 adults, according to a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security, who spoke during a conference call with reporters that had been described as an effort to correct the record about immigrant families being split up at the border.

Administration officials insisted on anonymity to explain the president's policy and deny many of the damaging stories that have appeared about it in recent days. That included an anecdote about a 4-month-old taken away from her mother by immigration authorities as the baby was breast-feeding, which one official said the department had tried unsuccessfully to verify.

"I hate the children being taken away," Mr. Trump told reporters on Friday morning in front of the White House. "The Democrats have to change their law — that's their law."

A short time later, he wrote on Twitter, "The Democrats are forcing the breakup of families at the Border with their horrible and cruel legislative agenda."

But Mr. Trump was misrepresenting his own policy. There is no law that says children must be taken from their parents if they cross the border unlawfully, and previous administrations have made exceptions for those traveling with minor children when prosecuting immigrants for illegal entry. A "zero tolerance" policy created by the president in April and put into effect last month by the attorney general, Jeff Sessions, allows no such exceptions, Mr. Trump's advisers say.

The president's efforts to deflect blame for the practice reflected the degree to which it has become politically unpopular, with Democrats, civil rights and immigrant advocacy groups and religious leaders condemning it as inhumane. Republicans have also begun to express unease about the practice. Speaker Paul D. Ryan, Republican of Wisconsin, said on Thursday that he was not comfortable with it, and Gov. John Kasich of Ohio tweeted on Friday: "Quit separating families. It's that simple."

The number released on Friday suggests that thousands of children have been taken from their parents at the border since late last year. The New York Times reported in April that about 700 children had been separated from their parents as they were processed at stations on the southwest border, including more than 100 under the age of 4. As the number of children in its custody grows beyond the capacity of existing detention centers, the Trump administration reportedly plans to erect a tent city in Tornillo, Tex., to house them.

The homeland security official said that the administration had drawn a “bright line” against taking babies from their parents because the government was unable to appropriately care for children that young, but could not immediately provide information about the age cutoff below which they would decline to take a child.

The official also denied that department personnel were using false pretenses to take away children, such as saying that they were going to bathe. But lawyers and members of Congress who have spoken with migrants separated from their children in recent days have reported hearing otherwise.

Representative Pramila Jayapal, Democrat of Washington, who recently visited 174 women apprehended at the border and being held in a federal prison facility in SeaTac, said some of them reported having been told that they needed to briefly leave their children to be photographed or see a judge, only to return and find the children had been taken away.

“They were forced to leave their children in this room, and then when they came back, the children were gone, and not a single one of them was able to say goodbye,” Ms. Jayapal said in an interview on Friday. One woman, she said, told her that a border agent had said she and the other detainees “should let all their friends back home know that this is what would happen if they tried to come into the United States illegally.”

Even as they defended the tactics, administration officials argued on Friday that they would prefer not to have to use them, and called on Congress to support legislation to change immigration laws so they would no longer be necessary.

At one point, the official complained that Joe Scarborough of MSNBC had been disrespectful for having said during a broadcast that the tactics being employed to separate children from their parents unwittingly were “just like the Nazis,” calling the comparison “disgusting.” Without naming Mr. Scarborough, he demanded an apology.

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